

RADIN]

HISTORY

83

they forced their way through the country occupied by the Winnebago, war would not have occurred.

The Winnebago call themselves *Hotcaggara*, which has been variously interpreted as "people of the parent speech" by James Owen Dorsey and as "big fish people" by other observers. Dorsey's explanation, which is the one most generally accepted, is most certainly wrong. [174] [648] [101] and represents an interpretation read into the word to make it fit the legends which claimed that the dialect was the most archaic of all the Siouan languages. It is true that *ho* may mean "speech," but *tsuyt* can only mean one thing, and that is "big, real." It is found with a number of animal names, such as *ktsuyt*, "turtle," and *enksuyt*, "wolf." It corresponds strictly to the Dakotan *tank*, "large." *Ho* means "fish" in Winnebago. The name Winnebago, as is well known, is of Algonquian origin. [192]

The Winnebago were first encountered by white men in 1634, when Jean Nicolet visited them as agent for Governor Champlain. Where he encountered them is not definitely known. The Winnebago as a rule claim that it was at Green Bay. Some discussion has arisen of late years on this question. No contemporary narrative of the event exists, nor have the Winnebago any clearly marked legend that might be interpreted as referring to it. [175]

An excellent description of their history has been given by P. V. Lawson² and from this we will quote at some length, selecting those periods that are of greatest importance in the history of the tribe and which can be illustrated by semihistorical legends still known to the Winnebago.

Much of our knowledge of the early history of the Winnebago is derived from Baquerville de la Potherie's *Histoire de l'Amérique Septentrionale*. A good deal of his information was obtained from Nicholas Perrot. For the period covering the years 1640-1660 we have the following information:³

A few years ago, they numbered possibly 150 warriors. These savages have no mutual fellow-feeling; they have caused their own ruin, and have been obliged to divide their own forces. They are naturally very impatient of control, and very passionate; a little matter excites them; and they are great braggarts. They are, however, well-built, and are brave soldiers, who do not know what danger is; and they are subtle and crafty in war. Although they are convinced that their ancestors drove upon themselves the enmity of all the surrounding Nations, they cannot be humble. Their women are extremely laborious; they are neat in their houses, but very disgusting about their persons. [162] [181] [152] [146] [264]

² The Winnebago tribe, in *Winnebago Archeologist*, vol. 3, no. 3, Milwaukee, 1897.

³ Quoted in Lawson's paper, p. 21.

- 175 Perrot also gives an account of the relentless war waged against them:

[839] This nation was a populous one, very formidable and spared no one; they violated
[266] all the laws of nature; they were Reubenites, and even had intercourse with beasts.
[648] If a stranger came among them, he was cooked in their kettles. The Malheurins (Mnominins) were the only tribe who maintained relations with them; they did not dare even to complain of their tyranny.

Lawson goes on to say:

175 So aggressive were the Winnebago that although their only arms "were stone
648 hatchets and knives," they declared war on all the other tribes. Expeditions sent to them by the Ottawa were eaten, which cruel deed increased the surrounding tribes that they formed an alliance and sent frequent war expeditions against the common enemy, and greatly harassed them. As a result of dismemberments among themselves and the continued troublesome activities of the allied tribes, civil wars broke out among the Winnebago. For better protection against the tribes they were finally forced "to unite all their forces in one village, where they numbered four or five thousand men," but an epidemic occurred which soon reduced their number to 1,500. "Despite all these misfortunes, they sent a party of 500 warriors against the Ojibwamun (Fox), who dwelt on the other shore of the lake; but all these men perished, while making that journey, by a tempest that arose."

[669] We suppose that this disaster occurred on Little Lake Battle des Morts, as it has
[162] been stated that the Winnebago resided on an island, which we suppose was Doty
[104] Island. The Winnebago being now greatly reduced by despair and famine, the other
[731] tribes were moved to pity by their condition and ceased to make war, and the Illinois sent 500 men, including "30 of the most prominent persons in their nation," to carry to them a supply of provisions. These the Winnebago received "with the utmost gratitude;" but at the same time meditated sacrificing the Illinois to the shades of their dead. A large cabin was erected to house their guests, and arrangements made for a dance in their honor. While the Illinois were dancing their bearings were cut, and the Winnebago "flung themselves upon the Illinois, massacred them, and sparing one man, and made a general feast of their flesh."

[266] Reprehending themselves for this dastardly deed, and fearing the vengeance of the allied tribes when it should become known to them, the Winnebago "resolved to abandon the place which they were occupying," and "took refuge on an island, which has since been swept away by ice flows." There they considered themselves safe, as the Illinois did not use canoes. The Illinois, finding that their people did not return, investigated the place and found only their houses. In order to allow a proper period for mourning for the dead:

"They deferred hostilities until the second year, when they assembled a large body of men from all Nations who were interested in the undertaking, and they set out in the winter season, in order not to fall therein. Having reached the island over the ice, they found only the cabins in which there still remained some fire, the Foxes (Winnebago) had gone to their hunt on the day before, and were traveling in a body, that they might not, in an emergency, be surprised by the Illinois."

They followed the hunters in the dead of winter, coming up to them on the sixth day and attacking their camp.

"So vigorous was their attack that they killed, wounded, or made prisoners all the Foxes, except a few who escaped, and who reached the Malheurins' village, but severely wounded by arrows."

He [Perrot] again refers to these traditional events as those of "the ancestors" of the tribe as he knew them, and which we judge to refer to ancestors of the Winnebago

of possibly the year 1600. There is no record to say how many years before, though 175
it was doubtless several scores, for 50 years before La Potherie published his history 648
Allouez had told the same story of the destruction of the Winnebago by the Illinois:
"About 30 years ago all the people of this nation were killed or taken captive by the
Illinois with the exception of a single man, who escaped, shot through the body
with an arrow."

This would place the event in about the year 1610.

He adds that when the captives were permitted to return to their homes this one
was made a "Captain of his Nation," as having never been a slave. When commenting
on this disastrous defeat of the Winnebago says, "If this strange event took place at
all, we must ascribe it to an earlier date than 1630 (1634), when visited by Niroet,
who "found them prosperous, and we can hardly suppose a tribe almost annihilated
and then restored to its former numbers in 30 years." . . . Niroet, it will be remem-
bered, was sent to this then unknown region for the purpose of "making peace"
between the Winnebago and the Hurons. As the Winnebago were strong enough
to command that attention from Governor Champlain, Dorte then is quite correct
in supposing the Winnebago to have been "a prosperous tribe" in 1634. The events
mentioned in the foregoing accounts are not historical, but traditional, for assuredly
they did not take place after the coming of Niroet, as he was followed by other white
men in such short periods as to make it impossible for the occurrence of those stirring
events to go unrecorded by others.

Charlevoix visited the tribe in 1720, and though a historian of note in old Canada,
records the occurrence as history, though we have shown it to have taken place, if at
all, more than a century before he went among them. He possibly got the story
from the records of Allouez, made a half century before, though it may have been a
riverside or cabin story heard by him at the time of his visit to this frontier of New
France. He says:

"The Outagamis, who are commonly called Punnas, formerly lived on the shores
of the bay . . . but they were attacked by the Illinois, who slew great numbers of
them; the rest took refuge on the river of the Outagamis (Fox River), which empties [31]
into the end of the bay. They settled upon the shores of a sort of lake (Lake
Winnebago)."

Charlevoix . . . adds another detail not mentioned by the other old writers.
In this same narrative he records that "sometime after" the Winnebago had settled
on Lake Winnebago:

"They undertook to revenge the defeat which they had suffered from the Illinois.
Six hundred of their best men embarked to seek their enemy; but while they
were crossing Lake Michigan they were surprised by a furious gale, which caused [73]
them all to perish."

The Winnebago still tell of these events and practically in the 173
same words as Perrot obtained them, as can be learned from the
following versions obtained in 1910.

a. When the Winnebago first originated, they were holy and
clever. They were equal to the spirits. In three days there lived a
Winnebago who could fly like a bird, one who could fly as far as four
days' journey from the village. There was another Winnebago who
could scent anything as far away as four days' journey from the
village. Then there was one man who could talk with the trees.
They told him many things. Finally there was one who could trans-
form himself into a buffalo. On account of these four men, it was

173 them to make it rain. Then, after the rain had fallen, they wrung out their blankets and drank the water.

All this time the men of the tribe were being killed off. After a while they began to kill the male children too. Whenever they saw a child they raised up its dress and if it was a male child, they killed it. However, there was a young mother who had a boy, and fearing that if the enemy discovered him they would kill him, she tied a string to the end of the child's penis and pulled the string back under its legs so that the child was given the appearance of a girl. From this woman and her child all the pure blood Winnebago living to-day are descended.

The war against the Winnebago was ended by a young Winnebago chief painting himself blue and surrendering himself to the other tribes.

- 175 The most important events of Winnebago history during the
648 eighteenth century were the various alliances into which they were drawn with and against the Fox Indians in the wars that the French waged against this brave tribe. The Winnebago at first allied themselves with the Fox, but afterwards joined the French. This alliance was destined to bring upon them a great disaster. Lawton describes this period in their history as follows:

In pursuance of their policy to combine all the tribes against the Fox, the French in some manner won over the Winnebago, their former friends and allies. Thus we learn that in the autumn of 1729 word was brought to Quebec of an attack by the Winnebago, Ottawa, and Menominee on a Fox village, in which there were killed 100 Fox warriors and 70 women and children. Among the killed of the assaulting party were four Winnebago. . . . Another account gives this assault as on a party of Fox returning from a buffalo hunt, and so made by Ottawa, Chippewa, Menominee, and Winnebago. The Fox village contained 80 men, all of whom were killed or burned except three. The allied Indians burned the cabins and also killed 300 women and children. This probably occurred in the winter of 1729, as the reports are of the date of May 6, 1736.

The Winnebago having broken with their neighbors and friends, the Fox, by this treacherous and unprovoked slaughter, were now in terror for the consequences of their miserable acts. Further attempts against the Fox tribes having been projected from Quebec by the fall of 1729, Sieur Captain Marin appeared at the old French fort at La Baye (Green Bay), and repaired its fallen walls. He had with him ten Frenchmen. On September 10th the Winnebago returned from their hunt and went to Marin to assure him that they still remained faithful to the French, at the same time presenting him with three slaves. They were rewarded with gifts of powder, bullets, hatchets, guns, and knives. Having ascertained that the Fox were not in their own country, the Winnebago took their families and camped on Doudo Island in the Fox River, adjoining their former location on Doty Island. Very soon thereafter the Fox and Sauk returned and surprised and killed some Winnebago fishermen. Then began a long siege of the Winnebago through the erection by the Fox on the Doty island water-side of two forts to command the water in all directions.

In order to compensate the Fox for the loss of two of their number through treachery, and procure a cessation of hostilities, the Winnebago decapitated two Menominee

who were with them, and delivered to them two others. But the Fox refused to be satisfied unless they also delivered to them four of their own number. This proposal the Winnebago considered an insult, and the siege was resumed. After the fighting had continued for about six weeks, Capt. Marin with five Frenchmen and thirty-four Menominee, came to the assistance of the besieged. When the treachery of the Winnebago in giving up several of their comrades to the Fox became known to the Menominee it required all Marin's powers of persuasion to prevent their deserting from his small command and leaving the besieged to their fate. After four days of fighting with the relief party under Marin it was discovered that the Fox had raised the siege by drowning in the night. Thus were the Winnebago, who had in the meantime been reduced by famine to the eating of boiled bear skins, delivered from the enemy. Marin's force thereupon retired, the Winnebago accompanying him to Green Bay, "where they established themselves in a fort."

For a more detailed account of the same events see Wisconsin Historical Collections, Vol. XVII, 88-100. The Winnebago have preserved a clear recollection of these stirring events in the semi-historical tale known as *Tasp's'apaga*. [113]

THE TALE OF TASP'S'APAGA*

In the early days of their existence the Winnebago were a successful people. They all fasted and were blessed by the spirits. It is for that reason that they were powerful and were called *Hutagawa*. 173

At one time a Fox Indian, whose nation was about to be destroyed by its enemies, came to these much-feared Winnebago and said, "Brothers, I have come to you for aid."

The Winnebago lived on one side of the lake and the Fox on the other and (because of the appeal) the former made friends of the latter, it is said, and the chiefs presented the pipe to one another. When chiefs exchange pipes with one another a very sacred bond is established. Thus many Winnebago and Foxes became friends, and Winnebago men married Fox women and Fox men married Winnebago women. 648

There was once a very famous warrior among the Winnebago whose crops were molested by the Foxes. *Tasp's'apaga's* wife thereupon said to him, "Why don't you take them (the marauders) to task?" Then *Tasp's'apaga* went to the Foxes and said, "Boys, all the water-melons are yours when they are ripe, if you desire to eat them." "All right," they answered.

On the morning after the second night *Tasp's'apaga's* wife woke up very early and went out to inspect the crops. Again they had been disturbed, so she immediately went back exclaiming, "How terrible! The largest and best of *Tasp's'apaga's* crops have been

* This has also been published by me with the accompanying Winnebago text in the Proceedings of the Wisconsin Historical Society, 1914, pp. 126-127, Madison, 1914.

* Probably at the junction of the Fox River with Lake Winnebago.

* The name means White-throat.

and died and therefore they (the Winnebago) have passed here. 173
Likewise, if you build a fire, always cover up the embers, for if you 648
should throw away any into the water (you would be detected)."

Then they went away in boats and returned to the lake. When they came to the narrow place where the main body of water lies there they went ahead along the left branch. Now this is all of this.

After a while the tribes came to see the Frenchman, for it was about the time fixed, and they said, "How have you been getting along?" Then he said, "Children, you know what kind of people the Winnebago are. We watched them very closely, but they got away, in what direction I do not even know. In the morning they were gone. I believe they went downstream, although I haven't even hunted for them upstream."

Well, all these different tribes looked for the Winnebago, for they wished to trail them and kill them. Now, although the Frenchman had expressly forbidden them, sure enough (the Foxes) found a fish that had been speared. "They've come past here," they said. However, when they came to the fork of the stream they didn't know which way (the Winnebago) had gone, but they noticed embers in the water. "They've gone by here." As it was impossible to go to the end of the stream in boats, all the half-breed Foxes got out (and walked). Soon they saw the oval lodges. "There they are," they said. For that reason the Foxes carefully looked them over and watched them. They inquired about them and found out that they had passed by.

The road (trail) was visible, so they chased them. Soon a cold autumn spell overtook them and they (the enemy) gave up the chase and returned home.

We will not follow the course of Winnebago history through all 114
its vicissitudes from their defeat by the Foxes to the British and 175
American occupancy, but only indicate important facts. An important local event was the coming of the Frenchman Decora among them and his marriage to the daughter of the chief of the tribe. An account of this has been preserved by the Decora family, although it is closely mixed up with what we believe is an account of the first contact of the Winnebago with the French.

HOW THE WINNEBAGO FIRST CAME INTO CONTACT WITH THE FRENCH AND THE ORIGIN OF THE DECORA FAMILY

The Winnebago originated at a place called Red Banks (Green 173
Bay, Wis.) (pl. 1). They had no tools to work with at that time. All
they had were bows and arrows and a fire-starter. They had no iron,
and if they saw a stone that was naturally sharpened in any way it
was considered sacred and they offered tobacco for it. They had 276
tobacco from the beginning. It was their most valued possession.